

SEPARATE STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS

Re: *Establishment of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau.*

This is a big day at the FCC as we launch our new Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. As I have said many times, business as usual is just not acceptable when it comes to public safety. That is why I have for so long supported establishing a separate and highly visible Bureau charged with keeping our communications networks up and running in times of emergency. To put it bluntly, I believe this is a step we should have taken more than five years ago in response to the searing lessons of 9/11. We didn't then; we do now, so I applaud Chairman Martin for his leadership in bringing us here today.

I proceed on the assumption that the launch of this new Bureau is much more than a mere reshuffling of resources. I see this action as marking a far-reaching commitment to ensure the safety of our citizens through a functioning and resilient communications system. My hope is that when history looks back on this reorganization, it will be seen as the first step in putting the FCC out front – where it long should have been – in providing communications security for all Americans in this dangerous age.

The creation of the new Bureau is the easy part. Not to minimize the long, hard work the Chairman and the staff put into making today happen, but now we turn to the daunting substantive issues that the Commission and our new Bureau must confront. These are plentiful, and history will not judge us kindly if we fail to address them head-on. What follows is a list of what I consider to be some of the most critical public safety and homeland security issues facing us today. I intend to revisit this list a year from now, by the way, and I hope to be able to say then that we have resolved or made significant progress on all of these challenges.

- The Bureau needs to be at the front of the pack in working to provide first responders and other emergency personnel with access to a reliable, interoperable network. I understand that developing interoperability will require cooperation among dozens of federal and literally thousands of state and local agencies. But no other agency in government has our expertise in communications, and we need to make sure that this expertise is made *fully* available to every agency that is part of this puzzle. At the end of the day, the really important thing is that the job gets done and that it get done quickly and effectively. When our nation's first responders rush into a burning building or a flooding house, the least we as a nation can do to honor their service is provide them with a radio that works. I don't think we can wait around for somebody else to do this job.
- The Bureau should work quickly to build on the NPRM on communications readiness that we issued in response to the report from our Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina. The FCC performed with distinction in the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes. Now it can provide much more in

the way of proposals and plans so we are ready next time. I know Chairman Martin, my fellow Commissioners and I are all looking forward to receiving an item that implements the many good suggestions offered by the Katrina Panel and its commenters. How we turn that record into positive results will tell us much about the efficacy of this new Bureau.

- The Bureau needs to lead the way in developing an Emergency Alert System that will support the delivery of messages to *all* wireless mobile devices. By the one year anniversary of the new Bureau, I hope that we have established a framework and timeline for this roll-out and that we are well into the job of implementation.
- The Bureau must also work quickly to further develop our standards for E911 capability for both wireless and VoIP devices. On the wireless front, we need to provide additional guidance to ensure that the location accuracy figures that carriers report accurately reflect real-world performance and are consistent across carriers. We also need to continue our efforts to make sure that consumers understand the level of protection that their mobile phones actually provide them, especially within buildings. On the VoIP front, we need to move forward with our ongoing rulemaking regarding automatic location sensing technologies.
- I note also the presence today of representatives of the deaf and hard of hearing community. Their safety is vitally important too and I hope the Bureau will work closely with them. They need to be central to all our deliberations here at the FCC. I am convinced that their access to all the exciting technologies coming at us depends upon a close and cooperative partnership among them, the industries producing new technologies, and the FCC.
- In addition to issuing orders and regulations, our new Bureau must also focus on serving as a voluntary clearinghouse for new ideas and best practices. As I have often noted, I believe this is one of the most important functions the Bureau—and the Commission—can perform. I appreciate my colleagues' willingness to work on this issue with me. For example, our nation's hospitals and medical care providers are integral parts of our nationwide emergency response system. Yet the level of communications preparedness at such facilities varies widely. Why should each medical facility across the land have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to developing an emergency communications plan? How much better would it be if they could simply call an expert at the FCC and learn about what has been tried already, what works and what doesn't work? Think of the money, maybe even the lives, such assistance could save. I hope that our new Bureau will take seriously its role as an expediter, facilitator, and aggregator of best emergency communications practices for medical care facilities, as well as day care facilities, small businesses, animal shelters, and other vulnerable institutions that more often than not lack the resources to hire expensive consultants or in-house security departments.

None of these tasks will be easy, and taken together they represent a formidable challenge. But as I have often stated, nothing this agency does is more critical than protecting the public safety. It's the first and most important obligation of government. I am looking for our new Bureau to be up to the challenge, and I look forward to working with its many excellent and hard-working team members next year and beyond.